

# YEMEN

| <b>PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE</b>                             | 2016       | 2015       |
|--|------------|------------|
| Problem understood                                       | 4          | 4          |
| Target date for completion of cluster munition clearance | 4          | 3          |
| Targeted clearance                                       | 4          | 3          |
| Efficient clearance                                      | 3          | 3          |
| National funding of programme                            | 3          | 3          |
| Timely clearance   | 4          | 2          |
| Land release system in place                             | 2          | 2          |
| National mine action standards                           | 5          | 5          |
| Reporting on progress                                    | 4          | 2          |
| Improving performance                                    | 4          | 3          |
| <b>PERFORMANCE SCORE: VERY POOR</b>                      | <b>3.7</b> | <b>3.0</b> |

## PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

New use of cluster munitions in air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition in 2016 and 2017, including in densely populated civilian areas, added significantly to the scale of Yemen's contamination at the same time as the conflict reduced the ability of the Yemen Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) to conduct survey or clearance. Humanitarian access for clearance is limited by the ongoing armed conflicts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Yemen should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions as a matter of priority.
- YEMAC should allow *and* facilitate survey and clearance by international operators.
- YEMAC and its international supporters should prioritise training teams in survey and clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR).
- YEMAC should report on its activities and publish, at a minimum, annual reports on programme capacity, the progress of survey and clearance operations, and funding.

## CONTAMINATION

Yemen was already contaminated with explosive remnants of war (ERW), including CMR, before 2015, but the escalation of armed conflict since 26 March 2015 has significantly increased both its extent and the threat to the civilian population, mainly as a result of airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition.<sup>1</sup> YEMAC reported in 2014 it had identified some 18km<sup>2</sup> of suspected CMR hazards in the northern Saada governorate bordering Saudi Arabia. It also knew of other areas of contamination in north-western Hajjah governorate that it had not been able to survey.<sup>2</sup>

Since the start of the latest round of hostilities in March 2015, international observers and researchers reported that Saudi coalition land and aerial bombardments using a variety of cluster munitions had struck many areas of north-western and central Yemen. YEMAC has identified heavy CMR contamination in Saada and al-Jawf governorates as well as additional CMR contamination in Amran, Hodeida, Mawit, and Sana'a governorates, including in Sana'a city.<sup>3</sup>

Human Rights Watch has documented Saudi air strikes using cluster munitions dating back to 2009.<sup>4</sup> In 2015,

after reviewing photographs and citing witness accounts, it reported finding air-dropped BLU-97 and CBU-105 sensor-fused cluster munitions as well as artillery-fired ZP-39 dual-purpose improved conventional munition (DPICM) submunitions in Saada governorate. It also reported finds of CBU-105 submunitions in Amran and Sana'a governorates. In 2016, it documented the presence of BLU-63 submunitions in Sana'a city after an air strike on the capital in January, and CBU-105 submunitions after an attack on the port town of Hodeida.<sup>5</sup>

Amnesty International also reported the presence of Brazilian Astros II submunitions in Saada, and British-made BL755 submunitions in Hayran in Hajjah governorate.<sup>6</sup> In December 2016, Saudi Arabia confirmed it had used BL755 submunitions and said it had decided to stop using them.<sup>7</sup> In March 2017, Amnesty corroborated new evidence that a member of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition had recently fired Brazilian rockets containing Astros II submunitions striking three residential areas and surrounding farmland in the middle of Sa'da city, injuring two civilians and causing material damage.<sup>8</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Yemen established a National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) in June 1998 by prime ministerial decree to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine action strategy.<sup>9</sup> NMAC, chaired by the Minister of State (a member of the cabinet), brings together representatives of seven concerned ministries and a number of non-government organizations.

YEMAC was established in Sana'a in January 1999 as NMAC's implementing body with responsibility for coordinating mine action in the country.<sup>10</sup> It works through two Regional Executive Mine Action Branches (REMABs) in Sana'a and Aden and a national training centre in Aden also set up in 1999 and another REMAB in al-Mukalla (Hadramout governorate) added in March 2004. REMABs are responsible for field implementation of the national mine action plan. However, escalating political turmoil and conflict in Yemen since 2014, together with lack of funding, have severely limited YEMAC's abilities to discharge its responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>

Communication and coordination between YEMAC headquarters and its Aden branch have been hampered by Yemen's de facto division between the Saudi-led coalition, which supports the internationally recognised government based in Aden, and Houthi rebels who control the capital Sana'a and operate in much of the north.<sup>12</sup>

The United Nations has supported mine action in Yemen since 1999 through a programme implemented by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) but from 2003 the programme came under national management. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) deployed an international adviser to YEMAC at the end of 2014 to support planning and programme management and in 2016 added a second international staff member as well as recruiting national staff in Aden, Saada, and Sana'a.<sup>13</sup>

## Strategic Planning

Yemen has no strategic plan for tackling CMR. In late 2015, UNDP said it introduced a new focus giving priority to reducing the emergency threat of explosive weapons and providing relief to heavily-affected communities. In 2017, UNDP was working with NMAC and YEMAC to prepare a new plan for Yemen's mine action sector.<sup>14</sup>

## Operators

All survey and clearance of ERW is conducted by YEMAC. By the start of 2016, it had some 850 staff, of whom between 350 and 400 were said to be active, under the management of offices in Sana'a and Aden. These included three unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance teams set up at the end of 2015 to focus on contamination in cities.<sup>15</sup> At the peak of its activities in November 2016, YEMAC had some 550 deminers engaged in field operations.<sup>16</sup>

Danish Demining Group (DDG) has offices in Sana'a and Aden, and in 2016 provided risk education and explosive ordnance disposal training and equipment for YEMAC, mainly through its Aden office. DDG said it was in discussion with UNDP about expanding support to include training in non-technical survey and information management.<sup>17</sup>

## LAND RELEASE

YEMAC did not conduct systematic area clearance in 2016. UNDP reported that teams working in nine governorates cleared a total of 3,072,181m<sup>2</sup> but operations concentrated on tackling high-threat, high-impact spot tasks. UNDP reported that YEMAC cleared a total of 262,810 ERW, including 2,196 submunitions. It also reported YEMAC destroyed 180,414 of these ERW, but did not disaggregate the total by device.<sup>18</sup>

Progress is hampered by lack of equipment or training in cluster munitions clearance. YEMAC reported that in areas where weather conditions have resulted in submunitions becoming covered with sand, its teams are conducting CMR clearance using mine detectors. Demolitions are carried out placing cleared items inside old vehicle tyres and setting fire to them. UNDP planned to bring in thermite torches as a safe alternative to explosives. YEMAC reported bringing the torches into the country was blocked by Saudi coalition screening, and the items were being held in storage in Djibouti. YEMAC said it would send 12 staff for training by The HALO Trust in Jordan in August 2017.<sup>19</sup>

## Safety

Three YEMAC deminers died in April 2016 when working on submunition clearance in Hajjah governorate. The precise cause of the detonation has not been confirmed.<sup>20</sup>

## ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Yemen is neither a state party nor a signatory to the CCM and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 4. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear CMR as soon as possible.

1 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Grant Progress Report for 1 October–31 December 2015, 25 January 2016.  
2 Email from Ali al-Kadri, General Director, YEMAC, 20 March 2014.  
3 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, 17 February 2016, and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, in Geneva, 6 February 2017.  
4 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015.  
5 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Saudi-Led Airstrikes Used Cluster Munitions", 3 May 2015; "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015; and "Yemen: Coalition Drops Cluster Bombs in the Capital", 7 January 2016.  
6 Amnesty International, "Yemen: children among civilians killed and maimed in cluster bomb 'minefields'", 23 May 2016.  
7 "Coalition Forces supporting legitimacy in Yemen confirm that all Coalition countries aren't members to the Convention on Cluster Munitions", Saudi Press Agency, 19 December 2016.  
8 Amnesty International, "Yemen: Saudi Arabia-led coalition uses banned Brazilian cluster munitions on residential areas", 9 March 2017, at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/yemen-saudi-arabia-led-coalition-uses-banned-brazilian-cluster-munitions-on-residential-areas/>.  
9 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 7 Report, Form I, 31 March 2009.

10 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.  
11 Interviews with mine action stakeholders who declined to be identified, February–June 2015.  
12 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, both in Geneva, 17 February 2016.  
13 UNDP, Support to Eliminate Mines and Explosive Remnants of War, Annual Progress Report 2016, Yemen, undated but 2017, p. 6.  
14 Ibid., p. 7.  
15 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February 2016.  
16 Ibid; and UNDP, Support to Eliminate Mines and Explosive Remnants of War, Annual Progress Report 2016, Yemen, undated but 2017, p. 8.  
17 Email from Megan Latimer, Programme and Operations Coordinator (Afghanistan, Colombia, Ukraine), DDG, 29 May 2017.  
18 UNDP, Support to Eliminate Mines and Explosive Remnants of War, Annual Progress Report 2016, Yemen, undated but 2017, p. 8; and "YEMAC productivity February – December 2016", received from UNDP by email, 5 April 2017.  
19 Interviews with Stephen Bryant, UNDP, Geneva, 6 February 2017 and Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, in Geneva, 9 June 2017.  
20 Interview with Stephen Bryant, UNDP, in Geneva, 6 February 2017; and email, 6 April 2017.